

INFORMATION REPORT

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SOURCE Officer of a US merchant ship.

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1. Sighting Off Freetown: While steaming southward off the coast of Sierra Leone, West Africa on 28 Nov 53, we made a radar sighting of what appeared to be a naval formation heading south. Sixteen small vessels were arranged in two columns of eight astern of a larger vessel. The vessels as viewed on the radar scope appeared to be keeping station with military precision. On arrival in Monrovia two days later I learned that the formation comprised a Soviet whaling fleet en route for whaling operations in the South.
2. Departure from Capetown: The Soviet whaling fleet sailed Capetown on 9 Mar 54 for the USSR. In the fleet were 16 trawlers about 90 feet in length and one whaling factory ship with twin funnels aft of an estimated 10 thousand net tons.
3. Naval Command: The commanding officer of the fleet was understood to be a Soviet Navy captain or rear admiral. The fleet displayed military discipline while in port as evidenced by the simultaneous striking of colors by all vessels at sundown.
4. Acquisition of British Currency: On 27 Mar 54, the Soviet commander is understood to have gone into Capetown to obtain 24 thousand British pounds for unknown purposes.

-end-

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